



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

FACTSHEET

What is expected of a volunteer coach?

Coaches play an important role not only in the sporting life, but also the everyday life, of the participants they coach. Coaches influence not only the development of sport-specific skills and sporting performance, but also the participant's development as a person and their approach to other aspects of their life. While at times it can be challenging, coaching is also a very satisfying role.

To be an effective coach, you will need a number of skills. A coach needs knowledge of the sport, but more importantly, they need to know how to pass that knowledge onto the participants they are coaching. To do this, a coach needs skills in:

- organising
- observing
- analysing
- adapting
- communicating
- improving performance.

Coaches should:

- be a good role model for the participants
- show enthusiasm and enjoyment for the task of coaching – make it fun!
- be self-confident, assertive, consistent, friendly, fair and competent
- ensure the safety of all participants
- behave ethically and dress appropriately
- maintain discipline throughout the session
- be very organised, not only for each session but for the entire season
- be able to justify, if necessary, why things are being done, or be 'big enough' to ask for suggestions when not sure and to admit and apologise when they make a mistake
- treat everyone fairly, and include participants of all abilities and disabilities, ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds.

Do you have a coaching philosophy?

A coaching philosophy will include aspects such as:

- how the coach communicates
- will the coach encourage athletes to ask questions and take some responsibility?
- will the coach seek to remain up to date and improve their coaching knowledge and skills?
- how behavioural issues will be dealt with
- will the coach include everyone, irrespective of ability or background?
- the coach's emphasis on winning, losing and cheating
- promoting respect for others



Planning a Training Session

How to structure a training session

It's very important that the coach takes the time to plan each training session. Training sessions should be developed from two or three goals that have been identified for that session. The elements of a training session that all coaches should include are:

- session introduction
- warm-up
- skill and fitness activities
- cool-down
- review.

Note: There is a sample session planner included in the 'Templates and forms for coaches' section of these web pages that you can download and use to plan training sessions.

Gathering information and setting goals

Before planning a training session, coaches should gather information about the participants, and set goals. If you are working with a new group, the type of information you might need includes:

- previous experience in the sport
- level of development, both with the technical and tactical skills of the sport as well as their level of physical fitness
- why they like to play the sport and what motivates them
- goals and aspirations in the sport
- any illness, injury or medical condition that might restrict their ability to participate.

Goals should be established for the season as well as each training session. Goals help to guide the program and provide a reference point to monitor progress throughout the season. Important elements of goal setting include:

- involving the participants wherever possible in the goal-setting process
- using session goals to help guide the selection of activities for that session
- setting SMART goals - goals should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound.

Tips for selecting and designing training activities

- Plan so that activities flow from one to the next smoothly. Have equipment close at hand and develop routines so that participants know what to do next
- Read manuals and books to get new ideas for activities and drills
- Drills and minor games from one sport can easily be adapted to suit another
- Over-plan rather than under-plan. It is easier to omit drills than to add unplanned drills
- Organise training sessions so that participants are actively involved. Use more groups with a small number of participants rather than a few groups containing large numbers
- Avoid activities that require inactivity or drills that eliminate participants. It is likely that the participants to be first eliminated will be the less skilled, exactly the participants who need most practice
- Plan drills so that participants have a good chance of success. This will improve motivation
- Even younger participants are capable of working independently in small groups. Develop activity station cards that explain the drill to be practised.



Organising a Group

Establishing Routines

By establishing routines and giving the responsibility for routines to the participants the coach can devote more time to nurturing the sport skill development of the players. Coaches should:

- establish 'set up' and 'put away' systems that participants can assist with for the equipment and facility. These must be supervised by the coach
- use consistent warm-up and warm-down routines
- set up areas and equipment in advance for specific elements of the program
- use more experienced participants to take help the less experienced ones
- have a consistent routine for moving between coach instruction and activity to reduce management time. If the players know where to go, how quickly they need to be there and what behaviour is expected of them on arrival, then more time can be devoted to activity.

Formations

Coaches should position themselves so that they can observe all participants. To maintain a formation, particularly when introduced for the first time, it is recommended that coaches use markers to define the formation. Care should be taken that the markers don't hinder performance by distracting the participant or causing an injury. The following formations usually work for most coaches when managing training activities (the coach is the 'C' and the participants are the 'x'):

<p>File</p> <pre> x x x x x x x x x x C </pre>	<p>Lines — end to end</p> <pre> xxxxx C xxxxx </pre>
<p>Lines</p> <pre> xxxxx xxxxx C xxxxx </pre>	<p>Grid</p> <pre> x x x x x x x x x C </pre>
<p>Circle</p> <pre> C x x x x x x x x x x </pre>	<p>Squares</p> <pre> x x x x x x C x x x x x x </pre>

Engaging the participant

The following strategies can be used to engage participants:

- **Voice and expression** – by varying voice quality and volume to suit the situation coaches can gain the participants attention, and add qualities such as excitement, concern and annoyance
- **Eye contact** - by maintaining eye contact, the coach can personalise things, give the impression of confidence, and add expression to the message



FACTSHEET

- **Signal for attention** - some coaches use a whistle and others use a variety of commands. Whatever the method, it should be loud, different and gain attention. Ironically it is possible to gain attention by being quiet. This usually happens when players are expecting noise and it doesn't happen.
- **Ask questions**- using questioning and discussion techniques shifts the focus from the coach to the participant. The participant takes on some responsibility and becomes more involved in the learning process.
- **Praise and compliment** - sincere and equitable praise and compliments to the group and individuals provides incentive and motivation to the participant.
- **Quality instructions** - Combining brief clear instructions with demonstrations enables the coach to maintain the interest of participants. One of the most difficult things for many coaches is to limit instructions to one or two key points and then return to the activity.
- **Increase participation** - long lines of participants waiting for a turn, and 'adult' games with large playing areas and large numbers of players on each team, greatly reduces the opportunities for players to be actively involved and the level of enjoyment for participants.



Keeping things safe

Good coaching practices to reduce risk

- Plan all coaching sessions
- Follow child protection guidelines
- Conduct pre-participation screening using a medical history form (*see example form in the templates for coaches area*)
- Ensure participants warm up prior to activity
- Don't mismatch participants (consider size/strength, not age)
- Clearly establish the rules for behaviour and activities
- Ensure the safety of playing areas, facilities and equipment
- Require participants to use protective devices
- Adapt activities for environmental conditions (eg. hot, humid, or cold, wet conditions)
- Cater for individual needs.

Tips for ensuring the safety of playing areas

Ensure that:

- the playing area is level, firm and free from obstructions eg holes or exposed sprinkler heads
- permanent fixtures such as goal posts are padded, flexible and highly visible
- corner posts and other field posts cannot injure participants on contact (these should be made of cardboard or other 'non-threatening' material)
- there is adequate lighting if playing at night
- there is adequate matting where necessary (eg, gymnastics, high jump)
- perimeter fences are well back from the playing area
- spectators are kept well away from the playing area.

Tips for ensuring the safety of protective equipment

Check that protective equipment:

- is worn by participants during training and competition.
- fits the participant correctly
- is regularly checked and maintained
- is specific and appropriate for the sport, size and age of the participant
- is being used according to the manufacturer's guidelines and the recommendations of the governing sporting body.

Tips for ensuring the safety of environmental conditions

In hot or humid conditions:

- encourage participants to wear loose, lightweight, light-coloured clothing made from a natural fibre (eg. cotton).
- avoid intense activity in hot or humid conditions and monitor participants carefully for signs of heat illness.
- help participants avoid sunburn by encouraging them to slip on a t-shirt, slop on some sunscreen, slap on a hat.
- encourage participants to drink plenty of fluid before the activity begins and schedule regular drink breaks during the activity

In cold and/or wet conditions:

- encourage participants wear clothing that is appropriate for cold conditions (eg. dress in layers to trap heat, wear gloves and a hat to reduce heat loss).
- avoid participants standing exposed to the cold for long periods
- encourage participants to change wet clothing as soon as practicable
- alternative venues (eg, indoors) should also be considered, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants.
- long breaks will cause the body to cool down, so participants should be encouraged to wear warm clothing. Coaches should plan training sessions to avoid long breaks. Another warm-up period may be needed if long rest periods cannot be avoided.



Incident Management

If the participant is unconscious, it is a life-threatening situation. The coach must respond immediately, as the participant may need resuscitation. Resuscitation should be performed by someone with first aid training and this is why it is good practice for all coaches to undertake this training.

Coaches should:

- have access to a telephone to contact an ambulance
- have information about the participant's medical history (especially for ongoing health issues such as asthma, epilepsy or diabetes)
- know how to access first aid equipment (blankets, first aid kit, ice etc)
- ideally, be able to administer basic first aid
- ensure an injury report form is completed.

STOP Procedure

The STOP procedure allows the coach to assess whether the injury seems severe and to determine whether the participant should continue with the activity.

- Stop
- Talk
- Observe
- Prevent further injury (via the three options below)

1. **Severe injury** - Get help

2. **Less severe injury** - Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation, Referral (RICER)

3. **Minor injury** - Play on

RICER regime

Management of sprains, strains, corks, bumps and bruises should follow this procedure:

What	How	Why
Rest the participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the participant from the competition area using an method of transport that will prevent further damage • Place the participant in a comfortable position, preferably lying down • The injured part should be immobilised and supported 	Further activity will increase bleeding and damage
Ice applied to the injury	<p>The conventional methods are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crushed ice in a wet towel/plastic bag • immersion in icy water • commercial cold pack wrapped in a wet towel <p>Apply for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48 hours</p> <p><i>Caution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not apply ice directly to skin as ice burns can occur • Do not apply ice to people who are sensitive to cold or have circulatory problems 	Ice decreases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • swelling • muscle spasm • secondary damage to the injured area
Compression applied to the injured area	Apply a firm, elastic, compression bandage over a large area covering the injured part, as well as above and below the injury	Compression reduces swelling and provides support for the injured part
Elevate the injured area	Raise the injured area above the level of the heart whenever possible	Elevation decreases bleeding, swelling and pain.
Refer and record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to an appropriate health care professional for definitive diagnosis and continuing management • Record your observations, assessment and initial management before referral — send a copy of your records, with the participant, to the health care professional 	To obtain an accurate, definitive diagnosis and for continuing management (including anti-inflammatory medication) and prescription of a rehabilitation program



Coaching children

Coaches of children should remember that:

- children's sport should be FUN!
- children need lots of opportunities for unstructured play, a broad range of activities, and the opportunity for creativity
- early sports specialisation is not recommended for young children
- the social aspects of sport are highly valued by children
- coaches should focus on skill development and individual improvement, rather than winning as the outcome
- all children deserve time and attention, not just the most talented

Children's Characteristics *(Note: these characteristics may vary among children)*

Children's Social Characteristics	Coaches Should
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concerned with themselves • learning social roles and skills • learning how to cooperate • come from different cultural and social backgrounds • learning how to cope with winning and losing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cooperation, teamwork and fair play during activities, • reinforce the contribution all children make to the group • provide a supportive environment and show sensitivity to individual differences
Children's Level Of Understanding	Coaches Should
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning the best way to do things • unable to process too much information • do not do things automatically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use role models to demonstrate good performance • introduce one thing at a time, keep instructions or questions short and simple • allow time for children to absorb information and practise skills
Children's Physical Characteristics	Coaches Should
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very active • lack fine motor control • develop at different rates • have different levels of ability • growing rapidly • less tolerant of heat and cold • children develop at different rates, and coaches may have both early and late developers in any group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan a variety of activities • allow time to learn skills • cater for varying ability levels • be aware that growth periods will alter the child's coordination and skills • ensure children wear adequate clothing, drink enough fluids
Children's Personality Characteristics	Coaches Should
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easily motivated • wide range of reasons for playing sport • sensitive to criticism and failure • short attention span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to what the children say • be positive, compliment effort and the parts of the skill that were performed correctly • maintain interest with a variety of activities, maximum participation and limited talk



Child protection

- Child protection is a complex subject with a number of strategies involved. It includes policies and practices put in place to keep children safe from harm — from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect
- Child-protection legislation sets out how child abuse should be reported and investigated, and imposes obligations on people dealing with children. This includes a requirement in most states and territories for people working with children, such as coaches, to undergo a national criminal history check (in other words, be screened) to determine their suitability for working with children.
- Most state and territory legislation also requires specific persons to report reasonable suspicions of children being abused or neglected. Individuals working with children including teachers — and in some states and territories, coaches — are required by law to report any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment, including neglect.

Tips for coaches to protect children

There are actions a coach can take to ensure children feel safe and protected when participating in sport. These good coaching practices include the following:

- use positive reinforcement and acceptable language when talking about or to a child
- develop a calm and non-confrontational behaviour management style
- make any physical contact with children (or adults for that matter) in a way that makes them feel comfortable, for example, shaking hands and a congratulatory pat on the back. If a coach must make physical contact with participants as part of an activity, then they should explain the activity and what they will do, and ask the participant's permission to do that
- avoid situations where an adult may be alone with a child, for example, dressing rooms or first aid rooms
- when children need to be transported, ensure there is more than one child (and, if possible, more than one adult) in the vehicle
- manage allegations (disclosures) of child abuse through established processes and reporting lines to ensure there is due process and natural justice
- document all incidents involving physical restraint of children or violence involving children
- document all incidents that seem to be unusual or 'out of the ordinary'
- coach children to be a 'good sport', recognise that they have a right to feel safe, and know what they can do if they do not feel safe (if they are abused, harassed or discriminated against).

A summary of child-protection information relevant to the sport industry is available on the Australian Sports Commission web site at www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/legischild.asp and the Play by the Rules web site at www.playbytherules.net.au

Note: Child-protection requirements vary for different states and territories. Coaches should seek out information about the child protection requirements in their state or territory.



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

FACTSHEET

Managing children's behaviour

Tips for managing behaviour

- Ensure that participants, parents and administrators are aware of the expected codes behaviour and consequences that will be applied
- Deal with the problem by focusing on the behaviour – don't get personal. Do not publicly insult or embarrass the participant.
- Avoid punishing a group for the poor behaviour of one participant.
- Take a firm, fair consistent approach to managing behaviour. Apply consequences quickly and fairly. It may be necessary to exclude an individual from an activity. The exclusion should be brief and the coach should discuss the incident privately with the individual while they are excluded.
- Avoid punitive consequences. Instead, require the offender to compensate and/or retribute the situation caused by the poor behaviour.
- Avoid using punishments such as running laps or push-ups
- Use rewards, praise and acknowledgment to reinforce desired behaviours.

Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Initially, quietly correct the child's behaviour:

- children, even young ones, know that there are rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable. Just drawing the child's attention to the fact that they have been noticed is usually enough to get them to change their behaviour
- do this as soon as possible after the inappropriate behaviour occurs
- alternatively, use non-verbal cues where possible — move closer, nod, frown slightly or stare
- join in and partner the problem child, without commenting
- divert their attention by asking a question: 'John, how is that serve coming along?', 'Sarah, can you organise this activity with your group, please?'
- praise a good aspect of their involvement
- ask them if they are having difficulty
- remind them of the group rules and appropriate behaviour (privately)
- address the behaviour, not the character, of the child - 'That's a silly thing to do, Matthew', not 'You are silly Matthew'
- find out why they are misbehaving and ask if it is helpful to the group (privately).

If the behaviour is not corrected, then relate the problem back to group rules:

- the coach might ask the child, 'What are you doing? Is this against our rules?' then ask what they should be doing
- politely ask the child to change their behaviour, reminding them of the consequence if they do not.

If the inappropriate behaviour continues:

- politely and calmly issue the consequence, or loss of privileges
- be respectful but firm and specific
- do not use punishment, blame, shame, pain, ignoring or sarcasm
- be consistent
- be brief — do not nag, lecture or interrogate
- remain calm — do not show anger, keep a 'cool head'
- forgive and forget

One way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour is to withdraw the child from the activity:

- place the child in 'time out' for a period before inviting them to rejoin the group. Rejoining the group occurs only if the child agrees to abide by the team rules
- the 'time out' area should be somewhere away from other children but still located close enough so that the coach is able to supervise the child
- on the child's return, find an early opportunity to praise them or involve them in leading a group
- be patient as some inappropriate behaviour may need time to correct.



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

FACTSHEET

Working with parents

Parents play a vital role in sport. Parental expectations have a big influence on the attitudes of children towards participating in sport, on behaviour, levels of performance and enjoyment.

Effective communication with parents is important. Parents can contribute positively to a child's sporting experience so coaches should take time to interact with them and try to ensure they understand the coaching role and responsibilities.

A good strategy for working with parents is to provide them with an induction kit that includes the coach's contact details, when and where training will be held, how you will advise them if training is cancelled, what their children should wear for training and games, game schedule, and codes of conduct for children and parents.

Parents' attitudes can range from one extreme to the other — from the over-protective, to the aggressive 'demander' — while others take no interest at all. Some can make a coach's task nearly impossible, while others are totally supportive and of great assistance.

Involving parents

It is important to get parents onside and involve them from the beginning of the season. This can be achieved by:

- encouraging their help and participation - many will feel they can't spare the time, or have the confidence to take on a major role but will be happy to help out with smaller tasks such as being a linesperson, scorer or helping with transport
- explaining your coaching philosophy and expectations of the participants and parents
- encouraging them to follow your lead of giving positive feedback — discourage destructive criticism of participants, officials, administrators or other teams, offer to help parents who are interested to better understand the game and the philosophy and aims of junior sport
- being prepared to listen when parents have concerns or issues to raise — although the coach has the final say in matters affecting the team, the parent may have a valid point.

Pre-season meeting

A pre-season meeting is a good way to meet parents and to discuss philosophies and housekeeping matters. Give plenty of notice of the date and time of the meeting through either a short letter, email or a phone call. If parents find they disagree with the coach's approach, they then have the opportunity to look elsewhere for their child's sporting experience.

Hold the meeting at a suitable venue — a single team might meet in the relaxed atmosphere of the coach's home, while a larger venue such as a gym, clubroom or hall might be needed if the meeting involves more than one team. Not all parents will be able to attend so prepare brief notes that cover the main points of the meeting.

A possible agenda for a parent meeting

- Introduction and welcome — introduce yourself and any assistants. Briefly outline your coaching experience and qualifications
- Aims of junior sport — discuss some of the research findings as to why children play sport. Ask parents to think about why their child wants to play
- How important is winning? — briefly explain your philosophy, attitude and coaching style. Explain what it is that you wish to accomplish over the season and how you intend to go about achieving your goals. Talk about your feelings on player rotation, half games and so on
- Cover 'housekeeping' matters — explain things such as training times and venue, how cancellations to training will be communicated, equipment and uniform requirements, registrations and medical forms
- Seek assistance with as many jobs as possible — these may include scorer, manager, uniform officer, linespeople, anything that help involve parents more



- Team rules — give a broad outline of your rules and expectations (participants should have an input into team rules at an early training session). Cover what you expect concerning behaviour and how you intend to enforce the rules
- Parents' roles — point out the value of parents taking an active interest in their child's sport, including attending as many games as possible. Discuss how you expect parents and spectators to act at games
- Question time — allow some time for general questions

Below is an example of an invitation to a parents' meeting:

Dear Parents

My name is Heather Brown and I have been appointed coach of Bathurst Tigers under-10 netball team for this season.

This letter is to invite you to a parents' meeting and to briefly outline my coaching philosophy. I have coached junior sport teams for several years and I am a Level 1 netball coach. I am really looking forward to meeting you and working with you over the coming months to make your child's participation positive and successful.

My coaching program will emphasise skill development, fun and working cooperatively. I want the children to learn all the basic skills of netball and to become as skilful as they can. I also believe that forming friendships, developing a feeling of belonging and learning to share experiences with others are important to children.

It is my intention to give all team members equal opportunity to play during the season. They will experience playing in a range of positions as I intend to rotate players as much as possible.

I am inviting all parents to a short meeting at my home on Wednesday, April 2 at 7.30pm. At the meeting I will further outline my coaching philosophy and we can also discuss important matters such as training, fees and fundraising and how you might be able to help. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,
Heather Brown



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

FACTSHEET

Working with officials

Officials (referees, judges, umpire, scorers, etc.) are often placed in the unenviable position of alienating 50 per cent of the crowd and players at any given time, and can be subject to criticism, abuse and harassment. It is important to remember that officials have the same needs and motivations as others involved in sport and that they have a critical role to play in ensuring the safe and fair management of competition.

Coaches can have a positive influence on minimising the abuse of officials and maximising the standard of officiating, by developing positive and supportive relationships with officials.

It is important that coaches are good role models to the participants regarding how officials should be treated. A coach who verbally abuses or berates an umpire is giving the message to the participants that this type of behaviour is acceptable. Coaches should display professionalism in their behaviour towards officials, and encourage participants to do the same. The coach should warn and/or counsel a participant who displays abusive behaviour towards an official.

Tips for working with officials

- A meeting with officials at the beginning of the season is a good idea. The coach can use this opportunity to introduce themselves and any support staff, to get to know the officials (get to see the human side) and to start developing open lines of communication away from the heat of competition.
- Invite officials along to pre-season team functions or meetings, where appropriate, in both formal (explain any new rules, how competitions will run) and informal capacities so that athletes and others involved in the program get to know them as people and not just as the face on the other end of the whistle or flag.
- Maintain open and positive lines of communication throughout the year — discuss any issues as they arise in an open and non-threatening manner away from the heat of competition. In this way the coach can help reduce the risk of small points of contention becoming major issues, minimise the abuse of officials and help ensure that any competition is played in a safe and fair manner for the enjoyment of all involved.



Inclusive coaching

Being inclusive means adapting and modifying coaching practices and activities to ensure that every participant - regardless of age, gender, ability level, disability and ethnic background has the opportunity to participate if they choose to. Good coaches adapt and modify aspects of their coaching and create an environment that caters for individual needs and allows everyone to take part. The onus of inclusion rests with the coach.

Many people think that you need special skills or knowledge to coach participants with a disability. This is not the case. The basic skills of good coaching, when applied with an inclusive philosophy, will ensure that the inclusion of all participants including people with a disability becomes a natural part of coaching.

Planning for Inclusion

The acronym CHANGE IT provides a tool that can be used to help modify the activity. Consider modifying the following factors to meet the individual needs of the participant:

Coaching style — for example, demonstrations, or use of questions, role models and verbal instructions

How to score or win

Area — for example, size, shape or surface of the playing environment

Number of children involved in the activity

Game rules — for example, number of bounces or passes

Equipment — for example, softer or larger balls, or lighter, smaller bats/racquets

Inclusion — for example, everyone has to touch the ball before the team can score

Time — for example, 'How many ... in 30 seconds?'

When preparing a coaching program, examine what, if anything, needs to be adapted or modified. In other words, what or how the participant can:

- see (predominantly relevant to participants with vision impairment)
- hear (predominantly relevant to participants who are deaf or hearing impaired)
- move (predominantly relevant to participants with a physical disability)
- learn, recall or reproduce skills (predominantly relevant to participants with an intellectual disability)
- perform tasks and activities (relevant to all participants).

There are very few disabilities or medical conditions that completely preclude participation in sport. People with a disability take part in sport and physical activity for the same reasons as other people: to improve fitness, develop new skills, increase social contacts, and to have the chance to achieve and receive recognition.

Qualities and skills of an inclusive coach

Qualities	Attributes
Patience	Recognising that some participants will take longer to develop skills or make progress than others
Respect	Acknowledging difference and treating all participants as individuals
Adaptability	Having a flexible approach to coaching and communication that recognises individual differences
Skills	Attributes
Organisation	Recognising the importance of preparation and planning
Safe practices	Ensuring that every session, whether with groups or individuals, is carried out with the participants' safety in mind
Knowledge	Utilising knowledge of training activities and how to modify them in order to maximise the potential of every participant



Tips for coaches working with participants with a disability

- People with disabilities have the right to participate in sport. They are very capable of being involved and can tell the coach what they are able to do.
- The basic principles of coaching apply when coaching participants with a disability. Provided the coach is prepared to accept each participant as an individual, coaching participants with a disability is not a difficult task.
- The needs, strengths and weaknesses of individuals will differ. The coach should assess each person's aspirations, needs and ability and plan a training program accordingly.
- It is not necessary to acquire extensive knowledge of the disability. The coach needs to understand how the impairment affects the participant's performance and be able to plan and deliver a training program that best suits the participant.
- Effective communication is essential, especially for participants who have sensory or intellectual disabilities.
- Do not under-estimate ability — set realistic and challenging goals as you would for all participants.
- Medical conditions, such as diabetes, epilepsy, asthma and heart disease, should not preclude people participating in sport. Sensible precautions should be followed and the coach needs to be aware of the coaching implications of the person's condition and what to do in case of an emergency. (Important note: not all people with disabilities have medical conditions such as those mentioned above. In addition, some people without disabilities may have one of the above medical conditions. Do not restrict your medical screening to people with a disability!)